

General Writing Guidelines

At New College Franklin, we value creative, thoughtful, and well-structured essays that use proper grammar, syntax, and diction to serve readers with clear and compelling communication of truth. Because of this, all our classes require a level of written excellence that is commensurate with the values of the college and our liberal arts curriculum. All essays should follow these core principles:

1. A thoughtful introduction leading to a clear thesis statement at the end of the introduction.
2. A creative, unique, or compelling thesis statement that demonstrates not only a student's synthesis of material studied in class, but also the student's own unique ideas on the subject.
3. A progression of ideas through the essay that directly support or relate to the thesis statement.
4. Thoughtful and specific use of the text to support and illustrate main points. All assertions should be grounded in texts and logical.
5. Each paragraph should contain a single, clear main point that is supported in the rest of the paragraph.
6. A conclusion that does not merely summarize the main points of the essay, but wrestles with them and leads the reader to think about why they are significant.
7. Avoidance of any major grammar and syntax errors.
8. Work should be academic in tone and style.
9. Adherence to the word or page requirement.
10. Proper citations.
11. A timely submission of the assignment.

Unless otherwise specified, papers should be double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with standard margins.

Citations are according to Chicago/Turabian style.

Below are examples of things that should not be in a paper:

1. Do not plagiarize. Work should be original, and any ideas or wording that is not original should be cited appropriately.
2. Ideas should not be vague, general, or syntopic (synthesis of various perspectives of massive ideas). They should be focused on particulars: ideas should be specific and narrow.
3. Papers should not sermonize or end with pithy theological or moral reflection/application unless the works or ideas being analyzed directly relate to theology or Scripture.
4. Papers should not try to address massive problems "in the modern world" or "throughout history."
5. Papers should not primarily be about finding fault with a text (students are not critics), merely summarizing ideas or plots, rehashing a lecture or class discussion without the

student’s own perspective, or straw-man/a priori rejection of an idea or text without deep engagement with it.

6. Rarely use “I”, do not chat with reader, and avoid colloquial and conversational language.

Below is a sample rubric that illustrates the writing requirements of New College Franklin.

| Essay Rubric | Excellent: “A” | Good: “B” | Fair: “C” | Poor: “D” | Failed: “F” |
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| Student identifies a specific research aim | Offers a unique or particularly insightful response to the assignment. | Responds to the assignment in depth. | Responds to the assignment, demonstrating solid conceptual understanding. | Fails to respond to or adequately grasp significant elements of the assignment. | Fails to respond to the assignment. |
| Student develops introductory and concluding strategies | Contains a compelling introduction and sharp/thoughtful conclusion. | Contains a strong introduction, and an effective conclusion. | Contains an introduction and a conclusion that all work together. | Omits introduction or conclusion. | No introduction or conclusion. |
| The thesis statement states main idea and forecasts the argument of the essay | Contains a clear purpose and a nuanced thesis or main idea. | Contains a clear purpose and a thoughtful thesis or main idea. | Contains a clear purpose, thesis, or main idea. | Omits a clear purpose, thesis or main idea. | Is far too general or far too specific. |
| Student provides detail and illustration to support claims of thesis | Contains strongly supportive details, a judicious sense of evidence, and convinces reader to accept main argument. The importance/relevance of all pieces of evidence is clearly stated. There are no gaps in reasoning—the reader does not need to assume anything or do additional research to accept main argument | Contains supportive details, a good sense of evidence. Provides necessary evidence to convince reader of most aspects of the main argument but not all. The importance/ relevance of some evidence presented may not be totally clear. Reader must make a few mental leaps or do some additional research to fully accept all aspects of main argument. | Not enough evidence is provided to support author’s argument, or evidence is incomplete, incorrect, or oversimplified. | Lack sufficient support for claims. | Does not support claims. |
| Student argues logically and effectively for thesis | Essay contains a clear argument introduced to the reader with a clear thesis. At the end of the paper, reader knows exactly what the author is trying to communicate and why. Recognizes and thoughtfully addresses complexities. Is logically developed and well-organized. | Recognizes and addresses complexities. Is logically developed and well-organized, but exhibits occasional weaknesses. | An argument is present, but reader must reconstruct it from the text. Recognizes complexities. Is logically developed and well-organized at times, but exhibits occasional weaknesses. | Contains trivial or frivolous points (or supporting material). Has a flaw in logic or organization. | Contains trivial argument or analysis. Has little controlling logic or organization. |
| Student attempts to develop distinct voice and tone | Uses a style and tone appropriate to purpose and audience. | Uses a style and tone appropriate to purpose and audience, with minor lapses. | Uses a style and tone appropriate to audience, with major lapses. | Fails to develop an appropriate tone. | Style and tone are such that reading comprehension is difficult. |
| Prose is edited, revised, and crafted; student presents polished document | Shows sophisticated sentence variety and paragraph development. Is virtually free of grammar and usage errors. | Offers adequate sentence variety and paragraph development. Contains a few grammar, word usage, and mechanical errors, but they do not impede reader’s understanding. | Displays general control of sentence variety and paragraph development. Contains several grammar, word usage, and mechanical errors, but they do not impede reader’s understanding. | Lacks sentence variety, paragraphs are poorly developed. Contains several flaws in grammar, or usage that may lead to confusion in meaning. | Contains so many flaws in style, grammar, or usage that reading comprehension is difficult. |